

# Westhoughton High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105252
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	308812
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Toft HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1223
6th form	139
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dr J Faulkner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr P Hart
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 December 2003
<b>School address</b>	Bolton Road Westhoughton Bolton Greater Manchester BL5 3BZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 814122
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Westhoughton High School is a community comprehensive school with a technology specialism. It serves the small town of Westhoughton which has average social and economic characteristics. Ninety five per cent of students are White British. Small numbers of students come from a range of minority ethnic groups but less than two per cent have a first language other than English. Slightly fewer students than average are entitled to free school meals but the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and has increased steadily in the last three years. The school hosts the local authority's provision for students with visual impairment, currently with six on roll. The sixth form is run in conjunction with three other schools, a college and a training agency to increase participation rates. The present headteacher has been in post for less than one year.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. It is well led by the capable new headteacher, effectively supported by an informed governing body and by specialists from the local authority. The headteacher is well supported by the senior leadership team, some of whom are newly appointed. Training to improve the performance of middle managers has recently been provided. Significant elements of improved practice are clear in both senior and middle leadership but time is now needed for them to develop maximum impact on the students' learning. The school's technology specialism has had a positive effect on its level of resourcing. It has stimulated much needed improvement to the environment for learning. This has clearly helped to improve students' motivation.

The headteacher has correctly identified the most important priorities for the school, particularly to improve students' learning and raise standards. Teaching is satisfactory overall although not all teachers enthuse students to achieve as well as they are able to, and too few use assessment information effectively in their planning and teaching. A number of teachers are not aware enough of what good practice is like in the teaching of their subjects. Strategies to improve learning are bearing fruit; for example, the rise in students reaching expected levels in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3. While standards overall are rising, they remain below the national average. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at A\* to C including English and mathematics is inadequate. Students make satisfactory progress in the sixth form but in mathematics standards are too low.

Students' behaviour and attitude to learning have recently improved and they are now satisfactory. Most students enjoy their time in school, develop well as individuals, build productive relationships with others and are respectful to teachers. The school deals effectively with the minority of students who misbehave. The building is well managed by the staff but its complex layout and narrow corridors mean that they have to go the extra mile to secure proper student behaviour. This is an inclusive school and staff go to great lengths to ensure that every student is well cared for and is encouraged to feel secure and valued. The more vulnerable students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are well supported not least through the 'Atlas Centre'. Good guidance is given on the key aspects of how to live healthily and the response of most students to this has been satisfactory.

The curriculum is broad and increasingly interesting to students, including those who prefer to learn through vocational and work-related courses. A large number of students in Years 10 to 13 do not receive their full entitlement to physical education. A suitably wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided and the many students who participate clearly enjoy and benefit from doing so.

The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's assessment that sixth form provision is satisfactory overall. Students say that they value the inclusive nature of the sixth form and that the quality of care, guidance and support is good. Inspectors agree with this view. Standards improved in 2007 and were satisfactory overall with good results in some subjects but others, particularly mathematics, being below expectations. Sixth form teaching is satisfactory. The best teaching

fully engages students and extends their capacity as independent learners. A newly appointed team manages the sixth form effectively. The curriculum offers a good range of GCE courses at AS and A2 levels and also some vocational options. The school is working with other providers in the Bolton West 14–19 Collaborative and this offers further pathways to cater for a broader range of students' learning needs.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop the capacity of leaders at all levels to secure further improvement across the school.
- Improve attainment at least to the national average, especially in mathematics, and in the number of students gaining five or more GCSEs at A\* to C including English and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that a higher proportion is good or better.
- Ensure that all students receive the nationally expected time allocation in physical education.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students' overall achievement in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory. From broadly average starting points on entry to the school they make satisfactory progress. The proportion of students achieving at least Level 5 in national tests in mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 has improved since 2005, and this continued in 2007. The English results fell well short of the school's target while those of mathematics and science were very close. Despite improvements, standards overall remain below the national average at the end of Key Stage 3.

In 2006, students' attainment in Key Stage 4 examinations met the national expectation. Overall GCSE results in 2007 were similar to those in 2006 and showed improvement on previous years, despite not reaching the school's targets. Almost all students leave school with at least one GCSE but the proportion gaining five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics was significantly lower than anticipated by the school.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress in line with other students. Some lower attaining boys and middle attaining girls performed less well than they should have done in their GCSE results in 2006.

GCE AS and A2 level results have improved a little in recent years. Those for A2 are at the national average but those for AS are still below national standards. Sixth form students achieve satisfactorily overall, better at A2 than AS level and better in some subjects than others. Results in some subjects are relatively good although mathematics is a cause for concern.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students' satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps to create the calm, cheerful atmosphere that pervades the whole school. They enjoy school life partly because of the good relationships that they develop with other students and staff. They have positive attitudes towards learning but do not always translate these into written work of high enough

quality to demonstrate their abilities. The school's determined efforts, particularly over the past year, have had a positive impact on the quality of students' behaviour which is satisfactory. Staff and students cope well with the cramped corridors and sprawling accommodation. Students report that instances of bullying are rare and swiftly dealt with. Students of different abilities and ethnicity are fully included in all activities. One student's comment that 'this is the best school because people are kind' echoes the opinion of many. Students wear their new uniform with pride and are pleased that, through the student council, they have had a say in its colour and style. They are keen to contribute to the community, for example obtaining lockers for student use and raising money for charities. They are developing a good awareness of the democratic system and how communities work. Most act safely and are aware of how to live healthily, although the adapted school dinners are not popular with everyone. Attendance levels are below the national average but, in response to concerted action by the school, are improving.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. A significant amount of teaching and learning has good features, although the quality varies between and within subjects.

Students make the greatest progress in lessons where they are engaged by a range of teaching and learning activities. This was highlighted in an English lesson where they were able to further their understanding of a difficult novel through lively participation in a drawing exercise. In less effective lessons, teachers dominate and are not sufficiently familiar with the potential of individual students. As a result students are passive in their learning, the rate of progress is slow and the most able are not sufficiently challenged.

A whole-school strategy to monitor students' progress is at an early stage of development. Good examples were seen where teachers used data and targets to identify underachievement and showed students how to improve, but this is not yet widespread. Students' written work shows that marking is not consistently frequent or rigorous enough to help students improve their own work.

The needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well understood and met. As a result, they are effectively supported by teachers and classroom assistants and they make satisfactory progress.

The impact of technology college status is beginning to have a positive influence on the quality of teaching. In a Year 11 design and technology class, for example, the most able students were able to demonstrate excellent standards of designing while using modern and sophisticated equipment. The use of information and communication technology as a tool for learning varies widely between departments.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets students' needs in most respects.

In Years 7, 8 and 9 the curriculum is broad and balanced. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is at an early stage of development. The school recognises the need to improve this and has recently appointed coordinators for both. In Years 10 and 11 progression routes are clear and the curriculum is tailored to meet individual needs, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some students spend additional time studying mathematics and English and this is entirely appropriate. Others enjoy a successful and developing programme of vocational courses. For these students, the school does not provide sufficient time for the teaching of citizenship, religious education and personal, social and health education. A significant number of students are unable to participate in physical education for more than one hour per week.

There is a satisfactory and popular range of opportunities beyond lessons. Students can take part in a selection of clubs and education visits. After-school revision classes are attractive to those students who have high aspirations.

The school supports students at risk of becoming disaffected with education through a variety of alternative experiences. This includes spending a week in a residential centre in the Lake District where they develop personal skills and learn how to work with others. Their achievements are recognised through formal qualifications. The current sixth form curriculum offers a broad range of academic courses, although timetabling for art and design is inefficient for both students and staff. There are too few vocational courses to meet the needs and interests of all students in this age range.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Good quality care, guidance and support underpin the school's strong sense of community. Staff know students well as individuals and work extremely hard to provide them with well-tailored support to help them succeed. Students identified a variety of people to whom they could go for help, ranging from older 'buddies' to the headteacher. A strong emphasis on treating others with respect lies behind the school's effective behaviour guidance. This places the onus on pupils to make the right choice because they wish to, not just because it is required. Procedures are in place to promote child protection, health, and safety. Careful identification of need and good support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as well as for those who are vulnerable in other ways, enables them to make similar progress to their peers. Students praise the support and guidance that helps newcomers to settle well and those making choices about which subjects to pursue to make informed decisions. Although students are aware of their academic targets, not all understand how to achieve them.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The able headteacher, supported by an effective, new senior leadership team, is setting a clear direction for the school. This quite rightly focuses on improving students' learning so that they achieve their full potential. Middle leaders share this vision and are empowered to lead and manage their areas effectively. The

school has invested in the training and development of this key group and they are increasingly able to evaluate the work of their subjects and to take action to secure improvement.

The senior leadership team has accurately evaluated the school's main strengths and areas for development but these are early days and the impact of their actions for improvement is still taking shape. Subject leaders have recently evaluated the work of their areas and have produced action plans although these vary in quality. The school's capacity to improve is judged to be satisfactory as the impact of actions taken by the school's leaders and managers has still to be fully realised. There are good indications of significant improvement, however, and the potential and commitment to achieve more is high.

Challenging targets have been set although some of these have not been met so standards of attainment are variable. Achievement for most students in the core subjects in Years 7 to 9 has improved but GCSE results are mixed with some well performing areas showing signs of improvement, and other areas where underachievement is evident, particularly English and mathematics. The quality of teaching is inconsistent.

Standards of behaviour have improved and the school is a calm and safe place. This supports the good conditions for learning which are now in place. Equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination is tackled, both very well.

The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's priorities and provides appropriate challenge and support. The school's finances are well managed with expenditure linked closely to development plans and staff and resources deployed so that satisfactory value for money is achieved.



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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

After our visit to your school I would like to tell you of our findings.

- Westhoughton High is a satisfactory school and it is getting better.
- It is soundly managed and the headteacher is ambitious to improve the school.
- You are given a sound education and are cared for very well by the staff.
- Most of you enjoy school, behave well and work fairly hard.
- Those students we spoke to were proud to come to this school.
- The few students who misbehave are quickly dealt with.
- You reach satisfactory standards in most subjects but results in some could be better than they are.
- The teaching is satisfactory overall. Some is good but some of the lessons lack pace and challenge.
- You get plenty of sound advice on how to live well and on courses to study.

Four improvements are needed to make the school better. They are:

- the managers of the school need to carry out fully the new plans for improvement
- standards need to rise further, especially the numbers of students getting higher grades in English and mathematics in the GCSE examination
- teachers need to develop better ways of encouraging you to aim higher, and use marking better to help you to improve your work
- all students should be given enough time to take part in PE.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you well for your future work and activities at Westhoughton High School.